

An Egyptian Romance.

The *National Zeitung* gives the following interesting summary of the papyrus which the Berlin museum recently acquired from the heirs of Richmond Lepsius, and the reading of which has only just been completed. The papyrus, which was written in the vulgar tongue, is not only of archaeological importance, but of much literary interest: being neither more nor less than an historical novel, left in an unfinished state. The papyrus dates from the sixteenth century B.C., and from the eighteenth dynasty; but the story related in it goes back nearly a thousand years to the reign of King Cheops, the fabulist builder of the pyramids. When the story opens, King Cheops is seated among his sons, and listening to their tales of the miracles said to have been wrought at the Court of his predecessors. Prince Chephren, who afterwards built the second pyramid, related that a magician in the reign of King Nebka, had made a waxen crocodile, which, if placed in the chamber of a wife untrue to her husband, would seize her and her paramour and deliver them over to her husband. Another prince related that King Seufra, the father of Cheops, feeling oppressed, and not knowing how to "relieve his heart," took counsel of a wise man, who advised him to go to the banks of the lake near the palace, and let all the maidens of the Court row up and down the water. This was done, and the monarch's heart was relieved. But all of a sudden one of the maidens began to make lamentations; for she had dropped a jewel into the water, which was forty feet deep. A magician was sent for, and reciting an incantation, he coaxed the jewel up from the bottom of the lake and returned it to the maiden. King Cheops was so struck with wonder at these stories, that he ordered sacrifices to be offered to the names of this sage and of the magicians, but Prince Hardadad informed him that they were not all dead, and that one of them named Dedi, dwelt in the city of Dednes. Prince Hardadad described him as being 100 years old, but was still able to eat daily 500 loaves of bread and the quarter of an ox, and to drink 100 flagons of beer. He was able to re-unite a head to the trunk from which it had been decapitated; to make lions follow him like dogs; and he also knew the places where would be found certain precious materials of the house of the god Toth, which King Cheops was very anxious to have for building his pyramid. The king sent Prince Dardadad to fetch the sage Dedi, whom he found stretched upon his bed. Dedi consented to accompany him into the king's presence, and upon being asked by his Majesty whether it was true that he could re-unite a decapitated head to the trunk replied in the affirmative; whereupon the king ordered a prisoner to be brought out for experiment. But the sage Dedi, asked that an animal be supplied him, and not a man; whereupon a goose was brought. Its head was cut off and placed in the eastern corner of the chamber, with the body in the western corner, and Dedi then pronounced a form of words, immediately after which the body got up and walked, the head wriggling along the pavement until the two met and rejoined, the goose waddling away. Dedi repeated the same miracle with a duck and a bull, and the king then questioned him as to the house of Toth. Dedi said that the materials which the king wished for were in a house at Heliopolis, but that he had no power to make them over to him, the only one who could do so being the eldest of the three sons whom Red Dedi should bear. Red Dedi, he added, was the wife of the Priest of the Sun at Sakhbu; and she would bear three sons to a god, and these three sons would be all kings, the eldest being high priest at Heliopolis. When the king heard these words he was troubled. There is a hiatus in the papyrus at this point, and without being told what course King Cheops has determined upon, we arrive at the main incidents of the story—namely, the birth of the children of the sun. When Red Dedi felt first the pangs of childbirth, the Sun sent for the goddesses of Isis, Nephtys, Meschent and Hekt, as well as to the god Chemu, and said to them, "Deliver Red Dedi of the three children who will one day be kings in this land; they will build your temples, they will feed your altars, they will make your libations, and will enrich your sanctuaries." The gods and goddesses assumed the shape of mortal women, and went to the house of the priest and offered to deliver his wife. The priest accepted, and Red Dedi accordingly gave birth to three boys an eli long, and with lusty arms. Meschent predicted that they would all reign, and they were, in fact, the three first kings of the fifth dynasty—Userkaf, Sahure and Kaka. The priest, full of gratitude, gave corn to the supposed midwives, who then took flight into the empyrean. But when the divinities got near to the domains of the sun, Isis said: "How is it that we have wrought no miracle for the children whom we have delivered from their mother's womb?" Thereupon the goddesses stirred up a tempest, and, after having enchanted the corn, caused the wind to carry it into the priest's house. When Red Dedi, after two weeks rest, resumed the management of her household, the servant told her that the corn given to the midwives was still in the granary. Red Dedi sent her to fetch a little of it; but she returned in terror, saying that she had heard in the granary the sounds of music and song, "as when the birth of a king is being celebrated." The miracle was nearly being fatal to the children, for when Red Dedi upon one occasion punished her servant, the latter left the house in wrath and said to the neighbors:

"How dares she to punish me, this woman who has given birth to three kings? I will go and inform King Cheops." Here the papyrus ends, so that no information is given as to what King Cheops did to get rid of these future pretenders, nor how they escaped his persecution; and this—as Herr Lepsius, in his prefatory notice, remarked—is all the more unfortunate, because the papyrus evidently hands down a tradition of fact. Thus we may learn from it that Chephren was a son of Cheops; that the fifth dynasty originated in the town of Sakhbu; that the three first kings of it were brothers, and that the eldest was priest at Heliopolis before ascending the throne. The papyrus in question is the oldest known document in the popular tongue.

Defense of India.

It is reported (says a London paper) that a great scheme for the defense of India has been laid out. It is a huge undertaking, but the Indian Government has approved of it, and it now awaits the sanction of the home authorities. The cost is calculated to be no less than £80,000,000, to be spent in eight or ten years. The plan includes the defense of Singapore, Ceylon, Aden, Bombay, and Kurrachee. The latter place will be a most important post. This, to begin with, is a large order, but it is by no means all. In pursuance of the new scheme proposed for the protection of India, a railway will be made to Pishcen, passing through a strongly entrenched camp there. The Khoja pass is to be fortified, and a powerful post created at Chumar, which will be the terminus of the railroad. From thence to Candahar all the earthworks and bridges are to be made so that rails can be laid down in a few days. It is also proposed to have the water-works and bridges prepared for a railway from Candahar to Cabul. The scheme for the defense of India shows that Peshawar is to be strongly fortified, and a strong post established at Jummood, and a strategic line of rails is to be laid along the banks of the Indus, connecting the posts of Kohat, Dera, Ismael, Khan, Attock, etc. The plan, moreover, provides that harbors of refuge for women, children, the sick and the invalids are to be formed at the hill stations of Murra, Dalhousie and Kassauni. If Russia gives us time to carry out all these things, we ought to be able to hold her in check very easily. Strongly fortified places, unless well defended, are sources of weakness rather than of strength, and one is bound to ask how many men it will take to maintain such a scheme of defense as this.

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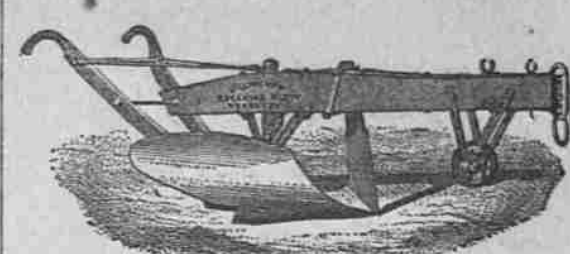
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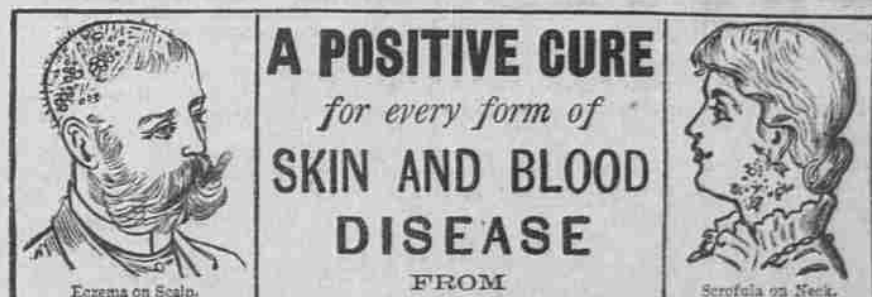
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